

Factors Related to Attrition and Retention of Under-Represented Minority Students: National and Regional Trends

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes analyses of selected data from files of the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:04). The NPSAS:04, conducted by the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) during the 2003-2004 school year, is a comprehensive nationwide study designed to determine how students and their families pay for postsecondary education and to describe characteristics of those enrolled. It captures extensive information on students' educational circumstances, and the resulting dataset affords the opportunity to describe the national context relative to a variety of educational issues. Our purpose is to present a limited number of educational variables, both nationally and regionally, relating to attrition and retention of under-represented minority students. Of particular interest are patterns and relationships that might be used to inform UW academic programs – we include such variables as institutional characteristics, students' financial status, pre-college factors, post-secondary academic performance, and extra-curricular obligations.

Results from the analysis of national and regional data consistently showed that under-represented minority students were more likely than White and Asian students to be at risk for attrition. Notable findings related to student retention from the NPSAS:04 were as follows:

- The NPSAS:04 index of risk is based on the sum of seven characteristics thought to affect persistence adversely: delayed enrollment, no high school diploma, part-time enrollment, financial independence, having dependents, having single-parent status, and working full-time while enrolled. Using this index, we found that Asian students—at least nationally—were the least at risk, with the majority (81%) having only one or two of the seven risk indicators. Conversely, two out of five of the Black students (41%) had three or more risk factors, appearing to be most at risk of attrition.
- While overall, the majority of students attended college full-time, at both the national and the regional levels, a higher percentage of Black and Latino students, as well as multi-racial students, attended school exclusively part-time, compared with White and Asian students.
- At the national level the percentage of students who had taken remedial courses was higher among Pacific Islander (39%), Black (35%), and Native American (33%) students than among White (24%), Asian (26%), and multi-racial (23%) students.
- Under-represented minority students earned slightly lower GPAs in college (ranging from 2.7-2.8) than did White and Asian students (about 3.0).
- National and regional data distinguish between the marital status of students' parents and the kinds of households in which students live. Nationally, Black students had the lowest percentage of

parents who were married (50%) and came from the highest percentage of single parent households (19%), compared with all other ethnicities. The percentage of students in divorced/separated households was much higher among Black (27%), Latino (22%), Native American (25%), and multi-racial students (22%), than among White (17%), Asian (11%), and Pacific Islander students (8%).

- At both national and regional levels, most students' parents had bachelor's degrees, with the exception of parents of Black and Latino students, whose parents were more likely to have a high school diploma or the equivalent.
- At the national level, Black students had the highest financial aid application rate (90%), the highest average amount of aid awarded (\$10,015), and the highest ratio of aid to budget (70%). The lowest application rates were among White (75%), Asian (75%), and "other" students (75%), and these students also had some of the lowest ratio of aid to student budget (about 55%).
- Nationally the average amount of total loans taken out during the 2003-04 academic year was higher among Black (\$6,147) and White (\$5,826) students than among Latino (\$5,049), Asian (\$5,177), and Native American students (\$5,331). The amount still owed on all undergraduate education loans was highest for Black students (\$15,047), followed by multi-racial students (\$13,637), and White students (\$13,075).
- Nationally, a higher percentage of Native Hawaiian and Asian students received help from their parents to pay tuition and fees (58% and 48%), while a smaller proportion of Black (29%) and Native American (27%) students received such help.
- Latino and Native American students tended to spend more time than White and Asian students at work. Black and Latino students were more likely than other groups to cite college tuition, fees, or living expenses as their primary reason for working and to deem their work as having a negative impact on their grades.

THE NATIONAL POSTSECONDARY STUDENT AID STUDY (NPSAS:04)

The NPSAS:04 was based on a nationally representative sample of undergraduate, graduate, and first-professional students enrolled in public baccalaureate institutionsⁱ across the United States at any time between July 1st, 2003 and June 30th, 2004. It included approximately 80,000 students from about 1,300 institutions.ⁱⁱ

Data were collected from multiple sources, including:

- Student records: Data from institutional financial aid and registrar records at the institutions currently attended.
- Student interviews: Data collected directly from sampled students via web-based self-administered or interviewer-administered questionnaires.
- Central Processing System (CPS): U.S. Department of Education Database or federal financial aid applications for the 2003-2004 academic year.
- National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS): U.S. Department of Education database of federal Title IV loans and Federal Pell Grants.
- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS): U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, database of descriptive information about individual postsecondary institutions.

SELECTED DATA

From the comprehensive NPSAS:04 dataset, we extracted information pertaining to all undergraduate students enrolled in doctoral four-year public universities nationally (a sample of approximately 15,000 students and 130 institutions). We were able to extract analogous data for schools in the “far west” region (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington), although we could not obtain the numbers of students and institutions sampled in this area. Because of the “low *n*” for many of the ethnicity groups sampled within the far west region (e.g. students identifying as Native American / Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander), we were unable to analyze several of the under-represented minority subgroups at the regional level. Accordingly, our analyses at the regional level are limited.

Since the purpose of the NPSAS:04 dataset is to capture data on student aid, a relatively large number of the variables relate to student financial status. However, a number of demographic and academic variables are also included; of particular interest, is a “Risk Index” computed by NPSAS:04 to demark threats to college persistence. This is described more fully below.

Additional information includes:

- Institutional Selectivity and Location
- Financial Factors
- Student Background
- Student Academics
- Other Factors

In constructing the comparative tables throughout the remainder of this report, we define under-represented minorities in the same manner as the UW Office of the Registrar. This definition includes students who self-identify as African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, but excludes those who report their ethnicity as Asian. For this reason, information on Caucasian and Asian students is provided together, followed by that for under-represented minority students and those of combined ethnicity.

Risk Index

The NPSAS:04 dataset includes a computed variable defined as the sum of seven characteristics inversely related to college persistence. These factors are: (a) having no high school diploma, (b) delaying college enrollment, (c) enrolling part-time, (d) being financially independent, (e) having dependents, (f) being a single-parent, and (g) working full-time while enrolled. It is important to note that most, if not all, of these are either directly or indirectly related to students’ financial circumstances—a critical factor in student post-secondary retention.

No ethnicity was reported as subject to all seven risk factors, either nationally or regionally (see Table 1). Nationally, Asian students were least at risk, with the majority (81%) experiencing only one or two of the seven indicators. However, two out of five of the African American

students (41%) and students in the “Other” category (46%) had three or more risk factors, appearing to be most at risk of attrition. At the regional level, African American and Hispanic students tended to have a higher number of risk factors than Asian and Caucasian students.

Table 1. Risk Index (percentage) - Nation (Nat) and Region (Reg)

	Number of Risk Factors											
	One (%)		Two (%)		Three (%)		Four (%)		Five (%)		Six (%)	
	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg
Caucasian	45	43	26	34	18	16	8	6	3	2	0	1
Asian	51	52	30	34	10	6	7	7	1	1	0	0
African American / Black	40	40	19	28	20	15	15	12	6	6	0	0
Hispanic / Latino	47	50	23	18	13	14	14	18	3	0	0	0
Native American or Alaska Native	36	low n	30	low n	21	low n	9	low n	5	low n	0	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	30	low n	26	low n	23	low n	17	low n	3	low n	3	low n
More than one ethnicity	43	low n	25	low n	17	low n	11	low n	4	low n	0	low n
Overall	45	44	25	31	17	14	10	8	3	2	0	0

Institutional Selectivity and Location

Literature on retention suggests that institutional characteristics may be relevant to retention (Hurtado, 1998). For example, the level of selectivity of the institution a student attends is often connected to students’ levels of academic preparation. At the national level, as Table 2 shows, the majority of students, across most ethnic groups, attended an institution that the NPSAS:04 determined was either *moderately selective* (61%) or *very selective* (23%),ⁱⁱⁱ with the exception of Native American students who typically attended either *minimally selective* (49%) or *moderately selective* (41%) institutions. Asian students tended to enroll at *very selective* (37%) and *most selective* schools (12%) at a much higher rate than any of the ethnicity groups. The same is true in the far west region where close to one-fourth of the Asian students (22%) attend some of the most selective institutions in the region.

Table 2. Selectivity of institution currently attending (percentage) - Nation (Nat) and Region (Reg)

	Most selective (%)		Very selective (%)		Moderately selective (%)		Minimally selective (%)		Open admission (%)	
	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg
Caucasian	3	8	21	25	64	67	9	0	3	0
Asian	12	22	37	31	48	46	3	0	0	0
African American / Black	2	6	31	20	56	74	8	0	2	0
Hispanic / Latino	3	13	21	15	56	72	12	0	8	0
Native American or Alaska Native	0	low n	10	low n	41	low n	49	low n	1	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	8	low n	19	low n	70	low n	3	low n	0	low n
Other	2	low n	31	low n	57	low n	7	low n	3	low n
More than one ethnicity	4	10	23	19	59	71	12	0	1	0
Overall	4	12	23	25	61	64	9	0	3	0

In addition, the location of institutions might play a role in retention. As shown in Table 3, at the national level, two-thirds of the students enrolled at four-year public institutions attended institutions in either *mid-sized* (having a population less than 250,000) or *large cities* (having a population greater than or equal to 250,000). At the regional level, these students made up an even higher 83%. Asian students at both the national and regional levels were more likely than any other group to attend college in a *large city*. In marked contrast, more than two-thirds of Native American students attended institutions in a *town* (population around 25,000). Thus, the location of the UW in a large city may play into the decisions of some Native American students about whether to attend college here.

Table 3. Type of location of institution currently attending (percentage) - Nation (Nat) and Region (Reg)

	Large city (%)		Mid-size city (%)		Urban fringe of large city (%)		Urban fringe of mid-size city (%)		Town (%)		Rural (%)		Not assigned (%)	
	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg
Caucasian	22	48	43	30	9	5	5	0	19	18	1	0	1	0
Asian	45	55	34	38	12	4	2	0	6	3	1	0	0	0
African American / Black	41	45	25	31	11	7	7	0	11	17	5	0	1	0
Hispanic / Latino	37	54	35	37	8	4	3	0	9	4	1	0	7	0
Native American or Alaska Native	11	low n	17	low n	1	low n	2	low n	59	low n	0	low n	0	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	36	low n	31	low n	10	low n	0	low n	23	low n	0	low n	0	low n
Other	35	low n	34	low n	14	low n	4	low n	10	low n	3	low n	0	low n
More than one ethnicity	32	40	40	38	6	2	2	0	17	20	1	0	1	0
Overall	27	50	39	33	9	5	4	0	17	14	2	0	2	0

Regarding distances from home, however, Asian students appear to have the largest average distance gap between their homes and the institutions they are currently attending at both the national (522 miles) and regional levels (438 miles), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distance between home and institution currently attending (average distance in miles)

	Nation (miles)	Region (miles)
Caucasian	171	224
Asian	522	438
African American / Black	229	121
Hispanic / Latino	152	83
Native American or Alaska Native	224	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	96	low n
Other	365	low n
More than one ethnicity	144	134
Overall	201	246

Financial Factors

Nearly all research on retention acknowledges the importance of students' financial needs in their decisions about whether to stay or leave college (Upcraft, Mullendore, & Fidler, 1994; Rendon, 1994; Mohammadi 1994; Tinto, 1994). Similarly, the NPSAS:04 reported significant differences in students' financial situations which we summarize here. In analyzing aspects of students' financial status, the NPSAS:04 defined a student's total budget as her complete educational expenses, including tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other living expenses. Furthermore, the NPSAS:04 used institutional reports to determine budget estimates. All average amounts of student aid, credit card balances, tuition, or monthly allowance reported by the NPSAS:04 were reported as weighted means, based on the recipients of the specified aid, tuition, allowance. In other words, non-recipients of the specified type of aid, tuition or allowance were excluded from these calculations.

As shown in Table 5, Asian students reported the highest amount spent on education, both nationally and regionally. This is consistent with this group's higher rate of attendance at the most select schools. Far west regional average budgets tend to be slightly higher than national averages for all groups except for African American students.

Table 5. Student total budget (average - adjusted for attendance)

	Nation (\$)	Region (\$)
Caucasian	13,128	14,331
Asian	14,537	15,552
African American / Black	13,414	13,279
Hispanic / Latino	11,861	13,451
Native American or Alaska Native	11,025	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	13,766	low n
Other	12,497	low n
More than one ethnicity	13,262	13,439
Overall	13,124	14,366

Students receive financial assistance from a variety of sources. The most traditional of these, parental support, is much less available to some ethnic groups than to others. As shown in Table 6, nationally, a higher percentage of Native Hawaiian and Asian students received help from their parents to pay tuition and fees (58% and 48%), while a smaller proportion of African American (29%) and Native American (27%) students received such help. Regionally, multi-racial students appeared to receive help from parents at the highest rate (56%), as compared with Asian (49%), Caucasian (46%), Hispanic (27%), and African American (21%) students. These patterns held true for expenses other than tuition, as well.^{iv}

Table 6. Help from parents pay tuition and fees (percentage)

	Nation (%)	Region (%)
Caucasian	46	46
Asian	48	49
African American / Black	29	21
Hispanic/Latino	32	27
Native American or Alaska Native	27	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	58	low n
Other	38	low n
More than one ethnicity	47	56
Overall	43	44

Other than assistance from their parents, students funded their education through various forms of financial aid. This was defined by the NPSAS:04 as the total amount of financial assistance received by a student during the academic year from any source except parents, relatives, or friends. The ratio of total aid to student budget provides the total aid received as a percentage of the total student budget. As Table 7 shows, nationally and regionally, African American students have the highest financial aid application rate (90%), the highest average amount of aid awarded (\$10,015), and the highest ratio of aid to budget (70%). The lowest application rates were among Caucasian (75%), Asian (75%), and “other” students (75%) and these students also had some of the lowest ratio of aid to student budget (about 55%).

Table 7. Financial aid

	Applied for any aid (%)		Aid total amount (\$)		Ratio of total aid to student budget (%)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	75	77	7,849	8,285	55	55
Asian	75	77	8,190	8,500	55	54
African American / Black	90	91	10,015	10,634	70	70
Hispanic/Latino	87	87	7,571	8,681	58	62
Native American or Alaska Native	82	low n	7,397	low n	60	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	86	low n	6,680	low n	46	low n
Other	75	low n	7,095	low n	53	low n
More than one ethnicity	81	82	7,966	5,325	56	36
Overall	78	79	8,093	8,327	57	56

The type of financial aid students receive is important. Grants are preferable to loans, of course, because grants do not have to be paid back. Students who take out loans to finance their undergraduate educations, even low interest loans, often face staggering debt when they graduate. Nationally, the most common overall aid package consists of a combination of grants and loans (32%), whereas, regionally, the most common package consists primarily of grants only (see Tables 8 and 9, respectively).

Nationally, Asian students are the most likely to receive only grants (37%), followed closely by Hispanic students (34%). African American students are the least likely to receive only grants (19%). Pacific Islander students are more likely than any other group to receive loans only (23%). Regionally, multi-racial students are more likely to receive only grants (55%), while African American students are the most likely to receive a combination of grants and loans (42%).

Table 8. Type of aid (percentage) - Nation

	Grants	Loans	Work-study	Other	Grants and loans	Grants and work-study	Grants and other	Loans and work-study	Loans and other	Work-study and other	Grants, loans, and work-study	Grants, loans, and other	Grants, work-study, and other	Loans, work-study, and other	Grants, loans, work-study, and other
Caucasian	28	19	1	2	31	2	1	1	4	0	5	5	0	0	1
Asian	37	13	2	1	26	6	1	1	2	0	10	2	0	0	1
African Amer. / Black	19	14	0	1	42	2	1	1	3	0	12	4	0	0	1
Hispanic/Latino	34	13	1	1	32	3	1	1	3	0	8	3	0	0	0
Native American or Alaska Native	30	9	0	1	56	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	28	23	0	5	26	0	4	0	2	0	5	6	0	1	0
Other	26	17	5	2	30	4	1	1	2	0	4	6	0	0	2
More than one ethnicity	28	14	2	2	26	1	2	1	8	0	8	7	0	0	2
Overall	28	17	1	1	32	2	1	1	4	0	7	5	0	0	1

Table 9. Type of aid (percentage) - Region

	Grants	Loans	Work-study	Other	Grants and loans	Grants and work-study	Grants and other	Loans and work-study	Loans and other	Work-study and other	Grants, loans, and work-study	Grants, loans, and other	Grants, work-study, and other	Loans, work-study, and other	Grants, loans, work-study, and other
Caucasian	32	19	0	2	25	2	1	1	6	0	4	6	0	0	1
Asian	43	7	2	2	23	5	1	0	3	0	12	2	0	0	0
African Amer. / Black	31	11	0	0	42	4	0	0	0	0	5	8	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	41	12	0	1	29	0	0	0	3	0	11	3	0	0	0
Native American or Alaska Native	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
More than one ethnicity	55	2	0	2	22	4	6	0	7	0	0	2	0	0	0
Overall	37	14	1	2	26	3	1	1	4	0	7	4	0	0	0

Regarding loans, the NPSAS:04 defined “total loans” as the amount of loans received by a student during the 2003-04 academic year, excluding federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) loans to parents. Table 10 shows both the average amount of national and regional loans granted to students by ethnicity, as well as the average amount owed on undergraduate loans by ethnicity in the 2003-04 academic year. As shown, nationally, the average amount of total loans taken out during the 2003-04 academic year was higher among African American (\$6,147) and Caucasian (\$5,826) students than among Hispanic (\$5,049), Asian (\$5,177), and Native American students (\$5,331). The amount still owed on all undergraduate education loans was highest among African American students (\$15,047), followed by multi-racial students (\$13,637), and Caucasian students (\$13,075).

Table 10. Loans (average)

	Total loans (excluding PLUS)		Total unsubsidized loans (all sources)		Cumulative borrowed for undergraduate education		Amount still owed on all undergraduate education loans	
	(\$)		(\$)		(\$)		(\$)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	5,826	5,248	5,716	6,469	13,275	13,536	13,075	13,146
Asian	5,177	4,340	5,467	6,375	12,840	11,677	12,158	11,641
African American / Black	6,147	low n	5,154	low n	14,944	14,239	15,047	13,353
Hispanic/Latino	5,049	4,550	4,978	5,103	12,078	11,480	12,050	11,681
Native American or Alaska Native	5,331	low n	3,455	low n	11,054	low n	10,912	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	Low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	5,620	low n	4,437	low n	12,084	low n	11,953	low n
More than one ethnicity	5,550	low n	6,223	low n	13,175	low n	13,637	low n
Overall	5,756	4,958	5,548	6,065	13,337	12,720	13,186	12,659

While loans must be paid back with interest, grants are awarded to students free and clear. The NPSAS:04 defined grants as the total amount of all need- and merit-based grants and scholarships received by a student during the academic year, and equal to the sum of all federal grants, state grants, institutional grants, as well as grants from employers or private sources. Tuition waivers and employer tuition reimbursements were included. As Table 11 shows, the national average amount of *total grants* received was significantly higher among Asian (\$5,613) and African American students (\$5,178) than for other groups (ranging from \$3,584 to \$4,455). African American students also had a noticeably higher average of *total merit only grants* (\$4,589), than did all other groups (ranging between \$2,732 and \$3,438). Asian students displayed the highest ratio of grants to loans at 222%.

Table 11. Grants (average)

	Total grants		Total merit-only grants		Total need-based grant aid		Ratio of grants to total loans	
	(\$)		(\$)		(\$)		(%)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	3,892	4,438	3,438	3,263	3,404	4,658	94	111
Asian	5,613	6,356	3,185	1,600	5,605	6,835	222	325
African American / Black	5,178	6,602	4,589	low n	4,188	5,998	111	low n
Hispanic/Latino	4,455	6,387	2,997	low n	4,466	6,558	153	332
Native American or Alaska Native	4,112	low n	low n	low n	3,166	low n	88	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	3,584	low n	low n	low n	3,230	low n	117	low n
More than one ethnicity	3,660	3,132	2,732	low n	3,511	low n	91	low n
Overall	4,228	5,315	3,494	2,738	3,828	5,731	109	206

In calculating the ratio of grants to loans, the NPSAS:04 included the total student loans (excluding PLUS) received as a percentage of the total student budget as well as the total student grant aid received as a percentage of the total student budget. Table 12 shows that nationally, students' financial aid packages more often consisted of loans than grants. Regionally, the overall average is similar, but due to the low numbers of students in many of the categories, it is difficult to see the regional picture clearly.

Table 12. Ratio of loans and grant aid to total student budget

	Nation		Region	
	Loans (%)	Grants (%)	Loans (%)	Grants (%)
Caucasian	42	28	41	29
Asian	36	38	29	41
African American / Black	45	35	low n	44
Hispanic / Latino	39	36	31	47
Native American or Alaska Native	43	33	low n	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	43	26	low n	low n
More than one ethnicity	41	27	low n	22
Overall	42	30	36	36

In addition to loans and grants, many students use credit cards to help finance their educations. Nationally and regionally, as Table 13 indicates, the majority of students (59% and 67% respectively) pay off their credit card balances each month. Moreover, as the table shows, a higher percentage of Asian and Caucasian students than other groups pay off their credit cards each month. Nationally, African American students are more likely to carry a monthly balance forward, but they have the lowest average balances due on their cards among all groups. Because of the low number of African American students regionally who provided information about their credit cards, regional patterns are not clear.

Table 13. Credit card balance (percentage)

	Pay off their balance (%)		Carry a balance (%)		Credit cards - balance due (\$)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	62	63	38	37	2,225	2,149
Asian	75	82	25	18	2,321	low n
African American / Black	40	low n	60	low n	1,758	low n
Hispanic / Latino	48	51	52	49	2,657	2,582
Native American or Alaska Native	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	60	low n	40	low n	low n	low n
More than one ethnicity	56	low n	44	low n	2,088	low n
Overall	59	67	41	33	2,202	2,177

Student Background

Parents' marital status often influences whether they can contribute to the costs of students' educations, and their levels of education often influences how much they can help their college-bound children navigate the sometimes confusing waters of higher education. As Table 14 shows, at the national level, African American students have the lowest percentage of parents who are married (50%) and the highest percentage of single parent households (19%), compared with all other ethnicities. The percentage of students in divorced/separated households is much higher among African American (27%), Hispanic (22%), Native American (25%), and multi-racial students (22%), than among Caucasian (17%), Asian (11%), and Pacific Islander students (8%). Interestingly, multi-racial students had the second highest rates of married parents at the regional level, following closely behind that of Asian students.

Table 14. Parents' marital status (percentage)

	Married/remarried (%)		Single (%)		Divorced/separated (%)		Widowed (%)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	78	75	2	2	17	19	3	4
Asian	84	84	2	1	11	14	3	1
African Amer. / Black	50	low n	19	low n	27	low n	4	low n
Hispanic / Latino	71	68	4	3	22	25	3	4
Native American or Alaska Native	71	low n	4	low n	25	low n	0	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	81	low n	7	low n	8	low n	3	low n
Other	81	low n	2	low n	12	low n	4	low n
More than one ethnicity	68	82	5	3	22	15	5	0
Overall	75	77	4	2	18	18	3	3

A similar picture emerged in the NPSAS:04 data on educational levels, as Table 15 shows. At both national and regional levels, most students' parents had bachelor's degrees, with the exception of African American and Hispanic students whose parents were more likely to have a high school diploma or equivalent. At the regional level, multi-racial students' had the highest percentage of parents with a bachelor's degree, followed by Caucasian and Asian students.

Table 15. Parent's educational status (percentage) - Nation (Nat) and Region (Reg)

	Did not complete high school (%)		High school diploma or equivalent (%)		Vocational or technical training (%)		some college—no degree (%)		Associate's degree (%)		Bachelor's degree (%)		Master's, first professional or higher (%)	
	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg	Nat	Reg
Caucasian	1	1	19	14	3	3	11	13	7	8	30	28	30	34
Asian	9	12	19	16	3	4	9	9	6	7	27	27	29	26
African Amer. / Black	4	10	26	23	4	0	17	16	10	12	21	19	19	20
Hispanic / Latino	12	19	25	28	4	3	13	12	8	5	20	10	18	23
Native American or Alaska Native	6	low n	23	low n	4	low n	8	low n	9	low n	26	low n	25	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	6	low n	17	low n	1	low n	8	low n	3	low n	32	low n	34	low n
Other	10	low n	19	low n	1	low n	8	low n	5	low n	23	low n	35	low n
More than one ethnicity	0	0	16	6	4	6	13	7	9	15	29	39	27	27
Overall	3	6	20	16	3	3	12	11	7	7	28	25	27	30

Student Academics

Academic performance is often a factor in students' decisions to leave college, and can play a significant role in students' ability to pursue advanced degrees. As Table 16 shows, overall college GPAs were slightly higher at the regional level (3.0) than at the national level (2.9), with under-represented minority students earning slightly lower GPAs (ranging from 2.7-2.8) than did Caucasian and Asian students (about 3.0). These minor GPA differences do not appear to be translating into degree expectations. Overall, the majority of students both nationally and regionally, expect to earn a master's degree or higher.

Table 16. Grades (standardized to a 4.0 scale)

	Nation (GPA)	Region (GPA)
Caucasian	3.0	3.1
Asian	3.0	3.0
African American / Black	2.7	2.8
Hispanic / Latino	2.8	2.8
Native American or Alaska Native	2.8	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	2.8	low n
Other	3.0	low n
More than one ethnicity	2.8	3.0
Overall	2.9	3.0

Another factor related both to attrition and time-to-degree is whether students take remedial coursework. Table 17 shows the percentage of students by ethnicity who took remedial or developmental college courses to improve basic skills after they completed high school. As the table shows, at the national level, the percentage of students who had taken remedial courses was higher among Pacific Islander (39%), African American (35%), and Native American students (33%) than among White (24%), Asian (26%), and multi-racial students (23%). Overall, the percentage of students who took remedial courses was slightly higher at the far west regional level (30%) than at the national level (26%), and African American students represented the highest percentages of students who took remedial courses at both the national and the regional levels (35% and 36%, respectively).

Table 17. Remedial courses ever taken (percentage)

	Nation (%)	Region (%)
Caucasian	24	28
Asian	26	29
African American / Black	35	36
Hispanic / Latino	27	31
Native American or Alaska Native	33	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	39	low n
Other	27	low n
More than one ethnicity	23	22
Overall	26	30

One of the risk factors identified by the NPSAS:04 was enrollment intensity. This is generally considered to be linked with student persistence, such that students who are enrolled full-time are more likely than part-time students to complete their post-secondary degrees. As Table 18 shows, most students attended school exclusively full-time (64% at the national level and 75% at the regional level). However, at both the national and the far west regional level, a higher percentage of African American and Hispanic students, as well as multi-racial students attended school exclusively part-time, compared with Caucasian and Asian students.^v Both nationally and regionally, then, a larger percentage of under-represented students attended school exclusively part-time than did other students. In addition, at the regional level, a slightly higher percentage of Caucasian students had a mixed part-time/full-time attendance pattern than did under-represented students.

Table 18. Attendance (percentage)

	Exclusively full-time		Exclusively part-time		Mixed full-time and part-time	
	(%)		(%)		(%)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	64	73	16	13	20	14
Asian	66	78	14	12	20	10
African American / Black	60	70	22	20	19	10
Hispanic / Latino	58	75	20	15	22	10
Native American or Alaska Native	77	low n	16	low n	6	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	83	low n	9	low n	7	low n
Other	58	low n	27	low n	15	low n
More than one ethnicity	67	77	14	18	19	5
Overall	64	75	17	14	19	11

Furthermore and consistent with their more part-time status than Caucasian and Asian students, at both the national and regional levels, under-represented minority students completed a slightly lower average number of credits than others. At the national level, Native American students appeared to take the lowest average number of credits annually, and Asian and Native Hawaiian students had the highest annual average. At the regional level, Asian students had the highest average annual credits, as Table 19 indicates.

Table 19. Total credit hours per year (average)

	Nation (credits)	Region (credits)
Caucasian	26	37
Asian	31	42
African American / Black	25	32
Hispanic / Latino	25	36
Native American or Alaska Native	20	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	31	low n
Other	25	low n
More than one ethnicity	27	36
Overall	26	37

Other Factors

Another factor often associated with retention is the frequency of and amount of time students spend on extracurricular activities, including work they do to help support themselves in college. As Table 20 shows, Hispanic and Native American students tended to spend more time at work than do Caucasian and Asian students. Nationally, Asian and African American students appear spent more time than any other group on community service.

Table 20. Hours of work per week (average)

	Hours worked per week— excluding work-study/		Hours worked per week— including work-study/		Community service— average hours per month	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	24	23	24	23	13	15
Asian	21	20	21	20	17	16
African American / Black	27	26	27	26	16	low n
Hispanic / Latino	27	24	27	23	14	13
Native American or Alaska Native	26	low n	26	low n	13	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	26	low n	28	low n	11	low n
More than one ethnicity	24	low n	24	low n	13	low n
Overall	24	23	25	23	14	15

In addition, the NPSAS:04 found that African American and Hispanic students were more likely than other groups to cite college tuition, fees, or living expenses as their primary reason for working and to deem their work as having a negative impact on their grades, as shown in Table 21.

Table 21. Impact of work on grades (percentage)

	Positive effect (%)		Negative effect (%)		No effect (%)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	20	18	40	47	40	35
Asian	24	19	39	42	37	39
African American / Black	21	27	45	34	34	39
Hispanic / Latino	19	13	47	47	34	40
Native American or Alaska Native	19	low n	44	low n	37	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	low n	low n	Low n	low n	low n	low n
Other	7	low n	53	low n	40	low n
More than one ethnicity	18	low n	42	low n	40	low n
Overall	20	18	41	45	39	37

Paying for housing increases the costs of college, but living at home can make it difficult for students to separate from family demands and focus on academic work. The NPSAS:04 found that both nationally and regionally a higher percentage of students reported living off campus than on campus or with parents, as Table 22 indicates. Nationally, a higher percentage of African American students reported living on campus and a higher percentage of Native American students lived off campus. Hispanic and “other” students more often reported living with their parents than did other students. Regionally, Asian students more often reported living on campus or with their parents, and African American students most often reported living off campus. Regional data were not available for Native American students and Native Hawaiian students.

Table 22. Housing (percentage)

	On campus (%)		Off campus (%)		Living with parents (%)	
	Nation	Region	Nation	Region	Nation	Region
Caucasian	28	22	57	64	15	14
Asian	29	24	48	53	23	23
African American / Black	36	23	48	65	16	13
Hispanic / Latino	19	20	53	61	28	19
Native American or Alaska Native	17	low n	74	low n	9	low n
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	31	low n	55	low n	14	low n
Other	23	low n	49	low n	28	low n
More than one ethnicity	31	27	52	40	17	34
Overall	28	22	55	60	17	18

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The national and regional data shed light on current trends in higher education with regard to students' academic backgrounds, performance, and expectations; socio-economic backgrounds and student aid status; as well as activities and obligations outside class. Consistent with previous research on factors that affect under-represented minority student retention, the findings in this report suggest that under-represented minority students are often more likely than White and Asian students to be at risk for attrition. Thus, the University of Washington can use this information to explore how the national and regional trends compare to UW trends and use this information as baseline information that might help develop programs and services that mitigate the impact of these trends on under-represented minority student attrition.

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- ⁱ The sample was limited to institutions that were eligible to participate in the federal financial aid programs included in Title IV of the Higher Education Act.
- ⁱⁱ Only approximate totals are provided to secondary researchers, such as OEA. Data were available to us as percentages and are reported by us in the same form.
- ⁱⁱⁱ NCES defines selectivity from a combination of variables from the Institutional Characteristics survey. Open admission 4-year institutions were formed into a separate category. For non-open admission institutions, an index was created from two variables: a) the centile distribution of the percentage of students who were admitted to each institution (of those who applied); and b) the centile distribution of the midpoint between the 25th and 75th percentile SAT/ACT combined scores reported by each institution.
- ^{iv} See NPSAS:04 report: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas/>
- ^v Attendance is based on the number of months enrolled full-time or part-time at all institutions enrolled at during the 2003-04 academic year. Accordingly, "exclusively full-time" is defined as enrolled full-time for nine months or more.